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Material Safety Data Sheets

The more you know about the materials you work with, the more you can protect yourself from their dangers. One way to understand these materials is to read their Material Safety Data Sheets, or MSDS's. These informational sheets tell you about a material's components, its dangers, and how to work with it safely. You should regularly refer to the materials' MSDS's in order to completely understand their specific hazards and the necessary preventive measures. For all the materials you work with, an MSDS will be easily accessible to you. If an MSDS is not available, ask your supervisor where to find it. If you have been frustrated in the past about technical terms or information being scattered in different places on various MSDS's, your problem has been solved! The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approved a standardized format developed by the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) that makes MSDS's consistently easier to read and understand.

Organization of the Standard MSDS

This ANSI-approved MSDS format is organized in a logical order with general information about the material at the beginning sections and technical information toward the end. The sheet is divided into sixteen sections, however, it is easier to understand when they are grouped into four general headings.

Product Information

Sections 1 -3 contain basic product information including manufacturer information, ingredients, exposure limits, hazard warnings and health effects.

Exposure Situations

Sections 4 - 6 contain first-aid information and what to do when fires, spills or leaks occur.

Hazard Prevention & Personal Protection

Sections 7 -10 tell you how to prevent accidents through safe handling and storage and how to protect yourself from exposure to the material.

Other Specific Information

Sections 11-16 contain other information including ecological hazards, disposal and transportation considerations, regulatory requirements and toxicological test data.

Once you familiarize yourself with the format, it will be easy to find the information you need quickly. Be sure you read the MSDS for any material you handle before you begin working. Remember it is easier to prevent an accident than it is to recover from one. A copy of the MSDS must be on hand for all potentially hazardous materials.

RELATED INFORMATION

Warning Labels

This is one of the quickest ways to find out what the hazards we face in its' use. These labels will vary from company to company but the information is basically the same.

- PROVIDE the chemical manufacturer.
- WRITTEN in English (and other languages if necessary)
- DISPLAYED where you can easily see them.
- MADE UP of words, pictures or symbols.

Signal Words

Signal words are key words that you can pick up on quickly. These are such words as: "CAUTION!" "WARNING!" "DANGER!" "POISON!" these are just some of the words you may see. There are other important messages that can be found on labels that are very helpful in planning on how you conduct the job.

- Information on physical hazards
- Information on health hazards
- First-Aid instructions
- Procedures to follow
- Handling, storage, and disposal details

Closure

As you use the MSDS you will find that you don't have to be a chemist to understand the information contained in them, however, if you don't understand something or confused ask your supervisor or consult your written hazard communication program.

If you receive a chemical without a MSDS you need to contact the company and get one. The Web has over 100,000 MSDS's, one address is <http://hazard.com/msds/> . Any questions contact Butch Jones at 48743.